

THIS IS A GREAT TITLE

I write this proposal with the idea that I will graduate on my own practice. In other words I will be doing a lot of small projects and present them as a whole. The problem with this is that I may connect things through association that are not truly together. So I have to inquiry how others feel about the things that I bring together and whether these projects can be presented as a whole convincingly

Summary

A thread through my work seems to be that I make visible what is invisible in technology. The technologies that I highlight often conflict with aspects of human nature, as understood by evolutionary psychology and evolutionary anthropology theory. This tension between technology and humans has implications for the social context in which the technologies are used. By facilitating experiences through designing situations and tools I want to raise awareness for these implications and encourage debate.

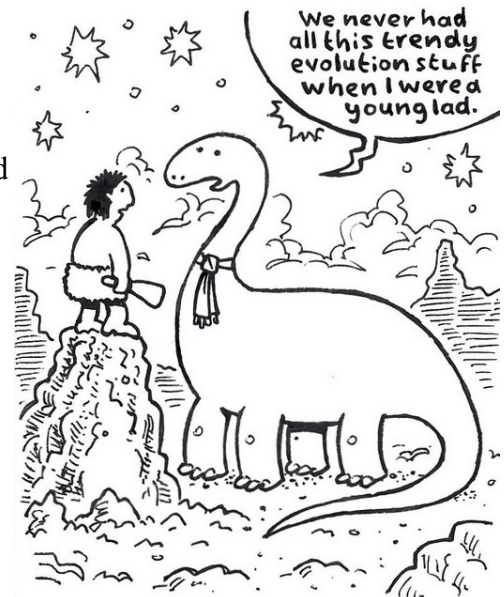
Previous practice

Free is Too Cheap

Free is Too Cheap is a browser add-on. A browser add-on is computer code that gets executed after the browser is ready with loading a web page. Users need to install a browser add-on for the code to have an effect. My add-on added a new section to every website which would fill half the screen. Every time an user goes to a website where Google makes use of the hard drive of the user. My section will inform the user that he/she has made money because Google is paying rent for using the users hard drive. About 80% of the websites will tell the user that money is earned if the add-on is installed. In reality no money gets transferred.

I think it's arguable that money is a means to facilitate trade in another way than trading goods directly like they used to do a long time ago. With the advancement of technology money has turned virtual. It's hard to see where virtual money gets generated especially if you contrast it with trading goods. This opaqueness allows for a system where somebody is making money for Google without realizing it. By navigating the Web a user generates data that Google sells with a big profit, but that's a concept that is hard to grasp.

To clarify that concept I created a fake message, that seems to come from Google, which would inform you that you make money out of the Google Union. This Union claims that it takes care of your interests and transfers money every time Google makes use of your hard drive and makes money through your Web labor.

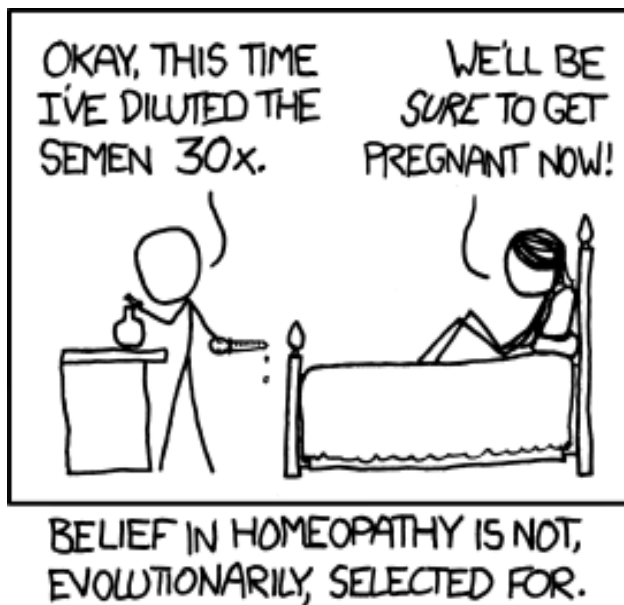


Biebearcher

This project is a website where you are prompted to "Biebearch" your hero. You can fill in the full name of your hero and click the Biebearch button. The website will then calculate how popular your

hero is on Youtube in comparison to Justin Bieber. Most of the hero's are less than 0.1% "Bieber". Apart from calculating the popularity of your hero it will also recommend people to you that you may also like. For instance if you Bieberearch Ghandi (who is 0.003% Bieber) the page will recommend peace activists and political leaders from India. You can click on links under the names of the recommended people to visit their Wikipedia page.

In the past there would be only one culture that you know of and this culture would suffice more or less, because it would be inspired by the immediate environment where you lived. The cave paintings for instance are thought to express hunting habits that were needed to hunt large animals which were a good source of food in the area. Now we live in an environment where culture and environment do not have this relationship automatically. For this reason each of us searches for culture and idols that fit in our personal way of life. I'm disappointed in the fact that I got to know Justin Bieber despite I didn't want to, while at the same time I have a hard time finding people that do interest me. I wanted to make a tool that introduce me to new people I wanted to know about while making clear that the attention mediated through mass media technology drifts off to a small group of people that are not necessarily interesting for everybody.



I created a tool that will do suggestions to you based on people you give as an input. By asking my audience for a hero I'm relatively sure that they will like this person. There's a chance that the audience will also like the suggested people making it easier for them to find the people they want to learn about. Youtube measures popularity by keeping track of how often a video is viewed. The more it's viewed the more popular it is. There is a small group of artists that have a tremendous popularity on Youtube. Justin Bieber is the most popular one and through showing how unpopular the hero's of the audience are in comparison to Bieber I want to prove to the audience that the Youtube technology is not geared to put a wide range of interesting personalities for many different people in the spotlights.

Into the Deep

Into the Deep is a performance where I mimic the movements of a computer program, which has learned itself how to make a virtual 3D model of a human like figure walk. These movements look unnatural. I performed the movements in a shopping street in Rotterdam on a daily basis at 4pm. At that time the audience could take a seat and look through the big windows of the gallery to see me "walk" through the shopping crowd. Afterwards I would go inside the gallery and have a conversation with the audience. This conversation would start with me asking questions about what the audience has seen, felt and thought while experiencing the performance. Later I would tell them what the inspiration for my movements were.

A great strength of computers is that they can repeat any data manipulation endlessly and do it very quickly. The speed at which a computer can make a decision between two choices is unprecedented. However this speed is accomplished because a programmer has decided what should be chosen, before the computer gets to work. Since a programmer needs to decide the "direction" of a program

beforehand he or she will use his or her understanding of the world to make the computer take the “right” decision. In other words the world view of a programmer is partly responsible for the way a computer program operates, but when the computer is doing its work; any ideology is obscured from our perception. In the very distant past the relation between what was happening and who was deciding that it should happen in a particular way was more clear, because you could see it with your own eyes. This work seeks to restore this clear relationship.

By mimicking a virtual computer model, which has learned to walk through almost endless repetition of simple decisions, and by placing these imitated movements next to real people walking, I created the opportunity to discuss how the software was working. If you see the movements of real people and the “learned” movements next to each other it is clear that the computer is doing something wrong. That is a nice starting point to discuss what is actually happening and which world view seems to have inspired the programmers



Theoretical background

In my work I tend to be inspired by evolutionary psychology and evolutionary anthropology. In these discourses scientist try to explain human behavior and culture from the idea that we came into being through evolution. One of the consequences for this idea is that our environment is changing rapidly together with some of our behaviors and culture, but that the vehicle for behavior and culture (our body) can adjust only slowly. to this new environment. Because the body is lacking behind some of our behavior and culture can't keep up with the changing environment. An example of evolutionary psychology is the following reasoning. In prehistoric times it was hard to get sugar, there were only a few resources through which men could get sugar and a lot of organisms were competing for it. Since sugar is beneficial to us, people who urged sugar strongly and therefore ate sugar with some regularity would reproduce more than people who didn't. This way, scientists argue, the whole of humanity slowly developed a strong urge for sugar, because the genes for this urge was passed on to next generations often. However as we started to change our environment it became more and more easy to get sugar up to the point that we can get it in every corner shop. It is thought that our urge for sugar has not changed together with the environment and that as a result of that we now eat too much sugar, since we are urging for it as if sugar is rare. I'm convinced that in a similar manner technology is ahead of our body to cope with it effectively. This can result into problems which we need to address.

Possible outcomes

I want to pursue a wide range of smaller projects, but frame them all in the same manner as I did with my previous work above. By reasoning in the line of evolutionary psychology and evolutionary anthropology theory thinking I want to analyze conflicts between “human nature” and technology and come to an artwork that should feel more natural to us. The form of such projects could be a performance, a website that functions as a tool or hardware designed to work better with our nature. The big challenge will be to present all the projects at the same time in such a way that it will make sense to the audience. In order to achieve this I may choose not to present all the work or I can categorize the works into domains like: community, education, economy, law etc. to make the collection of works more readable.

Possible research

There are a few strands that I could take regarding my research. I will provide a bullet list with the options since I'm not yet willing to write extensively about these possibilities as long as I haven't made a clear choice.

- First of all there is the “Steve option” to write about my own work, but I don't understand completely what this would entail.
- I can write about evolutionary theories, but I'm not a scholar in the subject nor may I have time to become one if I want to realize all my ideas for projects.
- I can mesh up the things that I've written so far and which inspired my current thinking and practice, in general this reasoning is perceived as unclear and I can understand that since it grasps from so many different sources.
- I can choose a specific behavior from a domain like “community”, for instance empathy, and read extensively about evolutionary theory and other kinds of theory on that subject to come to a conclusion about how the current technological depiction of this behavior contradicts or matches the empirical understanding that exists in science. This sounds exiting to me, but doesn't seem to go well with a broad practice.

Evaluation criteria

?

Things to keep in mind

Here's a list of things that I need to guard myself against.

- What do I simplify?
- What are my own assumptions?
- Is it still multi interpretable?
- What is the role of discussion?